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Switzerland's 'TGV'



Photos: Christian Ammann

For regular users of the 1.9km long Rheineck Walzenhausen Bahn the initials TGV do not indicate a high-speed train but describe the 'Train a Grande Vibration', the humorously ironic name given to this line's single railcar as it rattles and shakes up the 25% (1 in 4) incline that lifts it some 270m from the SBB station at Rheineck to its village terminus. The elderly Bdeh1/2 unit (built in 1958 and reconditioned in 2014) is the major public transport link for the 2,000 people living in Walzenhausen (AR), a small health resort located on its 'Balcony above the Bodensee' as its tourist publicity proudly states. On a clear day the views are stupendous taking in not just the eastern end of the lake, but also swathes of Germany and Austria, as well as this edge of Switzerland. The little train operates every half-hour throughout the day giving connections into the main line services on the line that follows the Rhein valley from Sargans to St Gallen. It has also been given the affectionate title of 's'Bähnli' – the little train – and was once locally owned, although since 2006 it has been part of the Appenzellerbahnen group of railways. Originally the rack part of the route was a water-powered funicular dating from 1896, that linked to a standard gauge tramway running along the road from Ruderbach to Rheineck station. It was completely rebuilt and reopened in 1958 as a combination adhesion and Riggenbach rack line electrified at 600V dc and at the unusual gauge of 1200mm. The station building at Walzenhausen also dated from 1958 but was modernised over last winter to give a friendlier ambience. During this work the line was closed and buses replaced trains. As will be seen from these super images the short (1.96km) trip runs through a delightful rural area that is well worth a visit. For more about the line see an article in the December 2012 *Swiss Express*. 

